Fresh Diplomatic Initiatives with Gulf Countries

*645. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to initiate fresh diplomatic relationship with Muslim countries in the Gulf region after having close relationship with America;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether he has visited the Muslim countries of Gulf region in this regard; and

(d) if so, the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) The Gulf region is India's neighbourhood. India enjoys traditionally close, historical and multidimensional ties with the Gulf countries. These relations are neither dependent nor subject to India's relations with other countries.

(c) and (d) Ministerial level consultations continue to be held regularly on an ongoing basis to further strengthen and enhance our political, economic, and cultural relations with the countries of the Gulf. It is in this context that visits to and from the Gulf countries have taken place. All these visits have contributed to further enhancing India's profile in the region and improving relations bilaterally.

Corruption in project Clearance

*646. SHRI RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that corruption is the first major problem as the funds earmarked for a particular project are not reaching their intended beneficiaries;

(b) whether the above observations made by Piara Singh Khabra as reported in Times of India dated 7th April, 2000, are true; and

(c) what steps are being taken to clean the administration at all levels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME